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Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan pursuant to paragraphs 6, 13 and 16 of Security Council resolution 1556 (2004), paragraph 15 of resolution 1564 (2004) and paragraph 17 of resolution 1574 (2004)**I. Introduction**

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraphs 6, 13 and 16 of Security Council resolution 1556 (2004), paragraph 15 of resolution 1564 (2004) and paragraph 17 of resolution 1574 (2004).

II. Insecurity in Darfur

2. Although there have been fewer clashes in Darfur between the Government and armed movements in February 2005 than in the previous two months, and some disengagement has occurred, the security situation remains fragile. Reports indicate that lawlessness and attacks by militia continue to blight the lives of thousands of civilians. It is hard to tell where economically motivated attacks end and politically or tribally motivated attacks by militia begin, but one thing is clear: the Government has not stopped these groups from attacking civilians.

3. The Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and Government forces clashed twice in February in locations north-east of El Fasher, in North Darfur. The first contact took place in Sayiah on 8 February and the second in Koma on 11 February. This trend of fewer instances of direct fighting or clashes between Government and SLM/A forces follows the pattern set in January, when the SLM/A reduced the number of its attacks against Government police and military forces.

4. Following reports of bombing in January 2005, the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) confirmed that the Government has started removing its Antonov bombers from El Fasher and Nyala. This is to be welcomed as an important confidence-building measure. Although the Government has kept its military helicopters in Darfur, there were no reports of the helicopter gunships firing their weapons in February.

5. Although the Government did not resume the "road clearing" operations it had pursued in December, its forces maintained a presence in several areas that they occupied during those operations north of El Fasher and east and south of Nyala. Moreover, local commanders have told AMIS patrols more than once that they have



not received any orders to redeploy to Nyala. At the same time, SLM/A forces have maintained their presence in nearby locations. The continued deployment of rival forces in relatively close proximity means that tensions and the potential for renewed, violent conflict remain high.

6. It is in this context that the Joint Commission, in its seventh high-level meeting in N'djamena on 16 and 17 February, decided to dispatch a team to Darfur to verify the positions occupied by the forces on the ground, with a view to working out a separation plan of forces. A clear delineation of the territory controlled by the various forces on the ground is a crucial element of any viable ceasefire agreement and a vital precursor to the disengagement of forces. I therefore welcome this decision and urge the Joint Commission to deploy this team as soon as possible. There is a risk that the deployment of such a team might spark a rash of new clashes on the ground as the parties attempt to gain as much advantage as possible before the delineation process is completed. However, without verification, the risk of continuous violent confrontation would be even higher. I call upon the Government and the armed movements to fully respect their commitments under the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement of April 2004 and the Abuja Protocols of November 2004.

7. Events in February have shown the potential for peaceful disengagement that can follow from an agreement on the delineation of positions of combatant forces. As pledged in the meeting of the Joint Implementation Mechanism on 17 December 2004, and reiterated in the January meeting of the Joint Commission, the Government pulled its forces out of the area around Labado, South Darfur when AMIS indicated its readiness to deploy a small force to the area. The African Mission has a platoon of 32 protection soldiers deployed to Labado and is planning to send a number of military observers to join them. Early indications suggest that this presence has had a calming effect in a very tense area that has suffered from some of the worst fighting in recent months, as evidenced by the return of several thousand internally displaced persons. I encourage the African Union to continue to take on as many of these missions as capacity allows so that the parties can disengage in other areas.

8. The recent commitment made by the Government at the Seventh Session of the Joint Commission to withdraw from three other villages in South Darfur may present AMIS with the opportunity to build on the progress achieved in Labado. If the Government follows through on its stated intention to pull its forces out of Marla, Ishma and Gereida in the near future, I will urge the African Union to step into these locations to continue facilitating the disengagement process.

9. Twice in February, United Nations/World Food Programme (WFP) marked helicopters came under heavy machine fire. In both cases, the helicopters were passing by Siyah en route to Malha Wells in North Darfur. In the first incident, on 8 February, the aircrew heard and saw bursts of fire in close proximity to their aircraft. In the second incident, on 15 February, the pilots heard three bursts of approximately six rounds each being fired at their helicopter. The SLM/A has announced that its forces had fired in the second incident because they had not received proper notification. In light of the fact that SLM/A controls the region in question and that it did not deny its involvement when asked directly by United Nations officials, one may assume its responsibility for the first incident as well. The African Union Mission in the Sudan came under fire no fewer than seven times

in February, a sharp rise over the one or two incidents in December and January. On 25 February, militia fired on an African Union Mission in the Sudan patrol in South Darfur. No Mission personnel were injured and none of its property was damaged during the attack. No excuse or explanation offered by the SLM/A leadership can possibly justify their forces firing on aircraft or vehicles that are clearly marked as belonging to the United Nations, the African Union or relief agencies and organizations. I condemn these acts. In the event of casualties, the commanders involved will have to bear the responsibility.

10. In cases of fighting between militia or Janjaweed and rebel groups, SLM/A found itself on the defensive in February. Janjaweed elements attacked one of their camps in the Korma area on 2 February and another in the western Jebel Mara region on 19 February. A third case of direct Janjaweed-rebel conflict reportedly took place on 21 February when militia members attacked the area of Tori in South Darfur. The African Union Mission in the Sudan reported that 13 villagers were killed and four were wounded. Fighting between SLM/A forces and tribal militias has also been reported in the western Jebel Maras.

11. While reports of direct conflict between the rebel movements and tribal militias were down in February, the militias continued to attack civilian targets. Janjaweed were reported to have harassed and attacked an internally displaced persons' camp, attacked village inhabitants and burned abandoned villages to discourage would be returnees.

12. The Janjaweed attack on Tori illustrates the persistent instability in South Darfur. Tribal militia activity is quite high in this state, with groups operating north of Nyala in Duma and Kidignir and to the south in the Gereida area. Some of this tribal militia activity, as also possible in the case of Tori, involved operations against suspected or known SLM/A-controlled areas.

13. It seems that much of the fighting by tribal militia is not necessarily connected to the political struggle between the Government and the rebel movements. Tribal militias are also involved in numerous incidents of livestock rustling as many large herds are moved to better pasture areas. Five cases of cattle rustling have been reported this month in South Darfur, and fighting was reported between rival Habania and Burgo tribesman in Nadeef and involving Daghou tribesman in Ishma on 10 February. Local police intervened, but not before two civilians were killed and some 1,500 head of cattle were stolen. The African Union Mission in the Sudan has been assisting local police in recovering the animals, and has had some success.

14. In sum, the security situation in the three Darfur states remains a great concern, with prospects for continued fighting between the rebel movements, Janjaweed and Government forces and direct attacks on civilians still in evidence. The Janjaweed's boldness, be it in regard to theft, attacks on civilians or armed movements, is a direct consequence of inaction by the Government to rein in, let alone disarm or arrest, these groups.

III. Protection of civilians in Darfur: measures taken by the Government to comply with its obligations relating to the Janjaweed, ending impunity, protection, human rights and confidence-building

15. While the situation in north and west Darfur remained relatively calm during the month of February, there were a number of attacks on civilians in villages and on roads in south Darfur, particularly in areas east of Nyala. Insecurity in areas outside many internally displaced persons' camps throughout Darfur continued to impede the regular and free movement of displaced people. The arrival in Darfur of the first civilian police personnel sent by the African Union may help to improve the security situation. According to the African Union, the police will maintain a regular presence in several of the camps. AMIS police officers will also carry out capacity-building activities/training with local police in order to encourage appropriate policing response and standards.

16. The impending drought in Darfur has potentially serious protection implications that will need to be addressed as part of the humanitarian response. Increasing scarcity of resources, coupled with perceptions by some groups of partiality in the distribution of humanitarian assistance, could lead to increased tensions and renewed violence. Humanitarian agencies have commenced assessments of the priority needs of all civilians, encompassing the needs of camp residents, host communities, returnees and nomads alike.

17. Further incidents of rape and sexual violence continued to be reported in February. Human rights observers continue to report allegations of rape throughout Darfur. Areas outside many of the internally displaced persons' camps remain particularly insecure. Women and girls remain especially vulnerable to attack outside the camps when collecting firewood and grass. There is ongoing concern at the continued failure by the police to properly investigate complaints, even when the required reports are filed. I am very concerned by the disturbing reports of the arrests by the police of unmarried women in the Mukjar area (West Darfur) who have become pregnant as a result of rape. Moreover, the police have been known to arrest those who report the alleged crime. These reports need to be investigated by the competent authorities as a matter of priority.

18. United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continue to train women in the internally displaced persons' camps in the construction and use of fuel efficient stoves as an alternative to the commonly used ones that require the frequent collection of fuel outside the camps. I am pleased to note the cooperation between the African Union and the humanitarian community on this issue and welcome the proposal agreed upon at recent discussions in El Fasher that the African Union Mission in the Sudan will conduct patrols on the routes women use to collect firewood, at which times they are most vulnerable to violence.

19. The amended circular on guidelines on the treatment of rape victims, which allows victims of sexual violence to obtain medical treatment at private clinics as well as at public hospitals without first filing a complaint with the police, has yet to be disseminated by the authorities to the Darfur states. Discussions with the Ministry of Justice have resulted in the Government agreeing, in principle, to undertake joint dissemination efforts with United Nations agencies in Darfur.

20. Children continue to be victims of indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population. I am particularly disturbed about reports of targeted attacks against children, such as the rape of girls. Like women, girls face serious obstacles in obtaining medical treatment and police response after a rape has occurred. The general climate of impunity seriously erodes children's rights to protection from abuse.
21. There has been no meaningful investigation into the reported killings of over 100 civilians and the mass rape of at least 30 women and girls in the attack on the village of Hamada (South Darfur) on 13 and 14 January. The investigating officer did not visit the scene of the crime, as required by law, and interviewed only a handful of the victims who were patients in the Nyala hospital. I strongly urge the Government of Sudan to ensure that these grave human rights violations are investigated thoroughly and that the perpetrators are brought to justice as a matter of priority.
22. Since December 2004, the Advisory Council for Human Rights has not produced any reports on actions taken by the Government to meet its obligations under the joint communiqué issued by the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations on 3 July 2004.
23. Human rights observers in Nyala were granted access to visit the national security main detention centre by the local authorities and were able to observe the conditions of the detention cells and interview detainees. The United Nations has submitted a request for full access to national security and military intelligence detention centres, as well as to prisons and to those held in police custody, and is awaiting a response from the Government.
24. Two of the committees established by the Government following the recommendations of the National Committee of Inquiry, the Judicial Inquiry Committee and the Reparations Committee, have begun visiting the Darfur states. Although the Judicial Inquiry Committee had appealed for information from the population of Nyala, there was little response since the population did not know about the Committee and its mandate and doubted its ability to deliver justice for the victims. Fears have also been expressed by the internally displaced population that information on alleged human rights violations provided to the Committee could have negative consequences for them.
25. The subcommittee of the Joint Implementation Mechanism on human rights and protection, the establishment of which I reported to you in October, met for its first substantive session on 20 February, after two postponements and considerable Government reluctance to take the meeting forward. Substantive discussion on three critical issues, follow-up to the killings in Hamada, the involuntary/inappropriate returns of internally displaced persons by the Committee for the Eradication of the Abduction of Women and Children, and the dissemination of the Ministry of Justice guidelines on the treatment of rape victims, was postponed until the next meeting of the subcommittee owing to the fact that key Government Ministries were not present. There is growing concern that the Government's lack of commitment and its failure to accord an appropriate degree of importance to the subcommittee process is minimizing its effectiveness as a forum to deal with serious human rights and protection issues.

26. Sixteen human rights observers are currently based in Darfur and three in Khartoum, an increase of six since January. Twelve United Nations Volunteers are expected to join them by the end of the month and 32 additional international professional staff are at various stages of recruitment. There are currently 26 international staff deployed in Darfur by other United Nations agencies and six in Khartoum working on protection issues.

IV. Humanitarian situation in Darfur

27. Over 2.4 million people continue to be affected by the conflict in Darfur, with internally displaced persons constituting about 1.8 million of the affected population.

28. The World Food Programme and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are planning a Darfur-wide registration exercise over the next few months, with the aim of establishing closer and more effective contacts with the internally displaced persons in the camps and their host communities. The registration will be linked to assessments in more remote locations in order to identify the specific needs of the population, which is increasingly affected by drought and the scarcity of economic and natural resources. Nomadic tribesmen complain about what they see as the lack of assistance to their communities, which has resulted in threats to humanitarian workers and food distributions.

29. General insecurity continues to present major challenges to the humanitarian response, especially in South Darfur, where a poor security environment displaced several thousands of internally displaced persons and residents from areas east and north-east of Gereida, scattering them throughout the area and further complicating access to these affected populations.

30. Relief workers continue to face dangerous challenges. On 21 February, seven staff members of an international NGO were detained overnight by the National Movement for Reform and Development (NMRD) rebels in Arosharo, near the Jebel Moon area, for failing to provide proper notification of their road movements. They were released early on the morning of 22 February after African Union and United Nations officials intervened. However, the NMRD forces did not release the three vehicles. The same NGO was also involved in two incidents early in the month involving local tribal militias disrupting aid distributions and stealing food. They were threatened by local tribesmen who complained that it is unfair that only internally displaced persons are receiving food aid while their families do not benefit from the relief programmes. As the cumulative effects of drought and displacement due to conflict and obstacles to the delivery of aid threaten many thousands of families in Darfur, competition for scarce foodstuffs is yet another cause of violent conflict.

31. Despite the presence of around 9,000 national and international humanitarian workers in the Darfurs, the capacity of the United Nations and of NGOs appear to be overstretched in some areas, particularly in North Darfur. Recent developments in the Darfur states linked to the effects of insecurity and increasing food shortages call for the involvement of more NGOs in the region as well as an increase in the capacity of those already working in the area. In the rest of the Darfur states, a limited number of larger international NGOs are currently implementing activities in areas out of the state capitals. Although scattered rural communities are

increasingly moving to larger centres for security and humanitarian reasons, the bleak forecast on the food security situation in Darfur call for an urgent expansion of assistance in more remote locations. For the same reasons, donors are urged to continue the provision of resources to humanitarian agencies.

32. The World Food Programme, in its annual Sudan food security needs assessment report, indicates that it expects the number of people and the level of food assistance required in the second half of 2005 to increase substantially if insecurity persists or the climatic conditions are unfavourable for agricultural production. The report notes that insecurity has disrupted traditional nomadic movements, market earnings and has substantially reduced the ability of farmers to plant and harvest in 2005. This has been further combined with the rapid increase in food prices over the past months, the limited purchasing power of vulnerable households and serious water scarcity. This concern was shared by a recent in-depth study on livelihoods of selected communities in Darfur. The study portrayed very bleak prospects for the situation in Darfur, noting that never in the history of Darfur had there been such a combination of factors causing the failure of livelihood strategies and loss of assets, including: systematic asset-stripping, production failures, market failures, failures to access natural resources, and failure to transmit back remittances. All this points to the need to combine increased food assistance with food security efforts and conflict resolution as soon as possible.

33. After months of negative trends, the health sector is recording positive developments in at least two areas: nutrition and polio vaccinations. According to a nutritional assessment conducted in Mornei, West Darfur, the general malnutrition rates appears to have substantially improved over the past few months with the malnutrition rate of 5 per cent. The previous assessment in Mornei, conducted in June 2004, found a rate of 25 per cent.

34. The second round of polio vaccinations commenced towards the end of the month, despite some complications in North Darfur where firing on or near United Nations helicopters forced the suspension of some activities North of Mellit. The previous round of polio vaccinations had been exceptionally successful, partly due to the compliance with the days of tranquillity by all the parties during the immunization as requested by my Special Representative. No new cases of polio have been reported since the vaccination campaign. The third and final round of vaccinations is planned for March.

35. These advances are shadowed by other health risks, such as a possible outbreak of meningitis following an ongoing outbreak in Eastern Chad and in some other parts of Sudan, such as in Blue Nile and Gadaref states. To date, a total of 44 clinically confirmed cases have been reported in the Darfur states since 1 January 2005. There is cause for concern, especially as overcrowded camps and the continuous movements at borders between the Sudan and Chad could increase the risk that the disease will spread. The World Health Organization (WHO) and its partners are presently monitoring the situation in and around Darfur.

V. Humanitarian access

36. As a result of the increasing harassment of NGOs through the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005, greater pressure has been placed on humanitarian operations. South Darfur, in particular, has seen the highest number of reports of harassment,

but incidents were also reported in North and West Darfur during February. These incidents include arrests, detention and abductions of, in particular, national staff, especially in South Darfur. Furthermore, commercial trucks carrying humanitarian assistance, including those marked as agency or humanitarian affiliated, continue to be attacked by armed groups on major routes, severely limiting access to the affected populations and causing major delays in the critical timely delivery of essential items, particularly food.

37. Despite the increased sporadic violence between the nomadic and farming communities, some agencies are expanding their geographical coverage to include areas with major humanitarian gaps and others that have not been previously assessed. Some progress was made in rallying agencies to cover the gaps left by the withdrawal of Save the Children-UK from Darfur, with at least five agencies commencing operations in the water, sanitation, food and primary health sectors.

38. In addition, in the past month, relief agencies have regained access to areas that had previously been closed for security concerns. Following the visit of my Special Representative to North Darfur on 26 January, where the SLM/A had indicated that populations in the area were in need of humanitarian assistance, a team assessed the area and cleared it for United Nations movement, allowing agencies to assess and respond to the situation. The area had been previously closed to United Nations agencies following the landmine incident in October 2004, when two staff members of Save the Children-UK were killed and one was injured.

VI. Funding

39. In the 2005 work plan for the Sudan, launched on 30 November 2004, the United Nations and its partners requested \$1.56 billion United States dollars to meet needs in the Sudan in 2005, with \$691 million of that sum required for activities in Darfur. To date, a total of \$345 million has been provided by donors in 2005, of which \$256 million has been dedicated to support the United Nations work plan projects in Darfur. Although this response has been positive, it remains insufficient. In addition, with \$240 million of the total sum allocated for food aid, donors have not concentrated on other equally important sectors, such as shelter and non-food items.

40. In order to prevent funding shortfalls, the United Nations system has produced a timeline for requirements within the work plan throughout 2005. According to the timeline projection, a total of \$322 million was required for United Nations activities in Darfur by the end of January 2005 and \$517 million by the end of March. Unfortunately, the funding target was not met for the month of January.

41. At meetings with donors in Brussels in February, my Deputy Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs stressed the urgency of rapidly providing up-front funds. This is necessary given the need to respond to drought in Darfur, prepare for the rains (especially in the west) and ensure a healthy food aid pipeline. I therefore call on the donors to address the existing gaps in the work plan through the generous provision of up-front funds.

VII. Return and relocation

42. There have been few reports of forced relocations or returns in the Darfurs in February following the improved dialogue between the Government and the humanitarian community, through the Monitoring and Coordination Mechanism, and the recently signed Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) agreement, which governs returns in West Darfur.

43. Nevertheless, in South Darfur, agencies encountered major obstacles in relocating some internally displaced persons in major gatherings in order to alleviate the burden on existing resources and to quell growing tensions in the camps. For example, the relocation of some internally displaced persons in Kalma due to the overcrowded conditions in the camp has yet to take place. Agencies are working with the Government to relocate internally displaced persons on a voluntary and appropriate basis.

44. Meanwhile, in North Darfur, after an initial setback in January, the relocation of some 25,000 internally displaced persons who arrived in the largest internally displaced person camp in the state, Abu Shouk, after an attack on Tawilla town in late November progressed relatively well. The initial site identified for the relocation was abandoned towards the end of January, when agencies were unable, despite numerous attempts, to find water on the site. Shortly afterwards, another site was identified and, with effective consultations between leaders of the internally displaced persons, Government authorities and humanitarian agencies, was deemed appropriate for the relocation. The site, Bisharia, located approximately 20 kilometres from El Fasher town, has water resources. Agencies are in the process of finalizing the demarcation of the site and the establishment of the various facilities, including water and sanitation sources and health facilities, in order to facilitate the relocation. While they await the preparation of the new site, the recent arrivals continue to receive humanitarian assistance at their current location at Abu Shouk camp.

45. In early February, 764 individuals were returned by the Committee for the Eradication of the Abduction of Women and Children from South Darfur to Northern Bahr el Ghazal. Agencies on the ground report that up to 15 per cent of these were involuntary returns. Women claimed to have been forcibly moved south, having been separated from their families. Similar allegations were made and verified during previous returns organized by the Committee in April and May 2004. This issue has been repeatedly brought to the attention of Government authorities and was recently placed on the agenda of the Subcommittee of the Joint Implementation Mechanism.

VIII. Darfur peace process

46. The political process aimed at bringing about a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflict in Darfur enjoyed little progress over the past month. The most significant event during the reporting period was the seventh high-level meeting of the Joint Commission in N'djamena on 16 and 17 February. The two days of meetings were attended by, inter alia, the Presidents of Chad, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville and the Sudan, the Chairman of the Commission of the African Union, as well as ministerial-level representation from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Nigeria

and Egypt. My Special Representative, Jan Pronk, attended the conference as head of the United Nations delegation.

47. The participants were presented with a report by the Chairman of the Ceasefire Commission, Major-General Festus Okonkwo, which detailed 10 ceasefire violations between early January and the date of the seventh meeting. The report faulted both the Government and rebels for the violations and criticized the lack of commitment to the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement, as demonstrated by the persistent violations. The Ceasefire Commission offered a list of recommendations to the joint commission on how to improve the security situation in Darfur, three of which deserve particular mention: first, that the status of the units making up the AMIS protection force be upgraded from company to battalion strength, and equipped accordingly; second, that the SLM/A and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) should unconditionally release to the African Union-Ceasefire Commission the locations occupied by their combatants, as agreed to at the last meeting of the joint commission; and finally, that the Government of the Sudan should review and resubmit its plan for the disarmament of the armed militia operating in Darfur because its current plans are ineffective.

48. The conclusions of the meeting of the joint commission were centred around five key decisions. Foremost among these, in terms of immediate steps to be taken, are the aforementioned decisions to dispatch a survey team to Darfur to delineate the areas of control held on the ground by the various forces and a call upon the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to reinforce its Ceasefire Commission as a way to encourage finding a solution to the crisis within an African framework. The joint commission also called for a rapid and vigorous resumption of the next round of peace talks.

49. I reiterate my call for the speedy deployment of a properly equipped and supported survey team to begin the task of identifying the areas controlled by combatants on the ground. I also support the Commission's decision to request the African Union Peace and Security Council to reinforce the Ceasefire Commission, which is on the ground in Darfur carrying out a very important task in a daunting environment with limited resources. I urge the international community to assist both endeavours generously.

50. As for the political process, the onus for success continues of course on the parties themselves. I therefore echo the call of the joint commission for a quick resumption of the Abuja talks, and I call upon the parties to return to the negotiating table prepared to discuss substantive matters with a view to signing a declaration of principles or a framework agreement as the decisive step towards a comprehensive peace agreement. One critical decision the parties can make in this regard is to approach the next round of Abuja talks with a disciplined focus on the political issues that underpin this conflict while leaving the important, though potentially distracting, security matters to the joint commission process. All other diplomatic efforts that are under way should be tailored to support this dual track approach.

51. Once restarted in earnest, the Abuja talks will be more likely to bear fruit if the parties demonstrate good faith. On the Government side, I would urge it to abstain from provocative acts on the ground and from retaliation or any other form of violence that would negatively affect the negotiating climate in Abuja. My advice to the armed movements would be to send delegations prepared to discuss matters substantively and offer the concrete and constructive proposals that will be needed

to move the negotiations forward. No matter how modest or dramatic the outcome of the next round of talks, the international community must rally around the parties to support any steps towards a peaceful solution to the crisis in Darfur.

IX. African Union

52. As has been the case for some months now, AMIS remains the international community's most visible and effective tool for monitoring the compliance of the parties to the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement and the Abuja Protocols.

53. Currently, AMIS has deployed a protection force of 1,405 troops who operate in support of 352 international military observers. With the Sudanese observers included, the total number of military observers operating in the three Darfur states reaches 424. Since my last report, the AMIS civilian police component began its deployment. The total size of the contingent is currently reported to be 93 personnel, all located in El Fasher. The total complement of the force, including civilian support staff, now stands at 1,942.

54. Additional troops, monitors and civilian police have been identified and are preparing for deployment, but their numbers will not get AMIS to its authorized strength level of over 3,300, all ranks, during the month of March. The reasons for this are twofold. First, not enough troop-contributing countries have come forward with the personnel required, so a gap remains between the troop ceiling and those available. Second, logistical, support and infrastructure limitations (primarily sewage handling capacity) have hampered the deployment of those personnel that are ready for service. Further deployments to El Fasher should thus not be expected until personnel have been deployed to outlying locations.

55. AMIS is receiving international support of various kinds from a number of countries, including funding for logistical support, helicopter leases, vehicles, training, transport, advice and planning. Many members of the international community are making crucial contributions that enable AMIS to carry out its mandate in Darfur. I encourage these Governments to continue to support the efforts of the African Union Commission to deploy and equip AMIS and call on others to follow their lead. Specifically, I urge Governments to focus their efforts on addressing the existing gaps that have been identified by the African Union Commission that are having the most significant impact on the further deployment and operational effectiveness of AMIS.

56. Within the constraints of its own resource limitations, the United Nations Advance Mission in the Sudan (UNAMIS) is cooperating and supporting AMIS in a number of ways. With regard to cooperation and coordination, the two missions are now in regular communication through three established liaison offices (Addis Ababa, El Fasher and Khartoum). These multiple points of contact facilitate communication at all levels, from the operational to the political. Both missions are exploring ways to deepen this relationship.

57. The United Nations Mission endeavours to provide support to AMIS in any manner possible. Currently, at the request of the Special Envoy of the African Union to the Sudan, UNAMIS has agreed to connect the El Fasher field headquarters of AMIS to the United Nations telecommunications network. This will markedly improve the African Union operation by providing the capacity for reliable and

secure communications between the AMIS presence in the field and its offices in Khartoum and Addis Ababa.

X. Preparation for the future support to the implementation of the Nairobi agreements

58. Prospects for peace in Darfur will only be strengthened if the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed on 9 January 2005 between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army is implemented successfully. At the meeting of the Security Council on the Sudan on 8 February, First Vice-President Ali Osman Taha and Chairman John Garang both expressed their commitment to bringing an end to the North-South conflict by following through on their obligations undertaken in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. To assist the parties to implement the agreement, the United Nations continues to plan and prepare for the deployment of a peace support operation.

59. Subsequent to the last Security Council meeting on the Sudan in early February, my Special Representative has pursued the planning process with a particular focus on issues related to the deployment of the military component of the anticipated mission. Predeployment issues were addressed at a meeting between Mr. Pronk and Chairman Garang on 22 February, where the latter was informed that the troop-contributing countries reconnaissance missions had begun in Government-controlled areas and would begin, before the end of the month, in areas controlled by SPLM in order to meet the time schedule for implementation agreed to by the parties.

60. In other aspects, the planning for the military component is proceeding apace. The military and mission support staff of UNAMIS are in constant and close touch with United Nations Headquarters to finalize plans and coordinate the operational and logistics elements, including the force structure and the staffing of the various headquarters for deployment of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNIMSUD). In addition, the memoranda of understanding between UNAMIS and the Verification and Monitoring Team and the Joint Military Commission currently operating in the Sudan have been finalized to enable these monitoring mechanisms to come under the direct operational control of the new Mission after its mandate commences.

XI. Observations

61. There were no significant advances in the search for a political solution to the crisis in Darfur over the past month. Both sides failed to capitalize on the momentum that was generated in January by the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government and SPLM. Neither side has suggested that it is ready for the serious, good-faith talks that will be required to revive a process that has clearly stalled. There are numerous statements from the Government that it is prepared to sit down with the rebel movements for talks. However, as I noted above, the Government has not stopped militia from attacking civilians. Such inaction and prevailing impunity continue to undermine the confidence that statements by the Government are intended to inspire on the other side of the negotiating table.

62. For their part, the rebel movements do not inspire much confidence that they are prepared to seize the political opportunities that have appeared since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement over six weeks ago. On the ground, their forces have refused to reveal their positions to the African Union Ceasefire Commission, have continued to harass relief workers and have fired on African Union and WFP helicopters. At the political level, the rebel movements appear to be increasingly divided, resulting in a diminished capacity to engage in serious political negotiations. Concerted political pressure must be brought to bear on all sides to create the conditions for the serious talks at the negotiating table, conditions that have so far been largely absent.

63. On 28 February, at United Nations Headquarters, I met with Alpha Oumar Konaré, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, to discuss coordination of activities in a number of specific countries, including the Sudan. During discussions with the Chairperson and his delegation, I acknowledged the important work being carried out by AMIS, while also stressing that all steps must be taken as soon as possible to strengthen the peacekeeping presence in Darfur so that stability may be restored to the region. In this regard, it was agreed that an African Union-led assessment of current peacekeeping requirements in Darfur would be undertaken as a matter of urgency. The United Nations and other key partners would actively participate in the assessment. We are awaiting dates of the mission from the African Union. In addition, if the Security Council, in its forthcoming resolution on the Sudan, requests that I report on what can be done to strengthen the peacekeeping presence in Darfur, I will send a United Nations team to the region to make a full-fledged assessment of options.

64. In the meantime, during this period of relative calm, the international community must not miss the opportunity to strengthen the position of the African Union force in Darfur. A fully staffed and effective AMIS will increase the chances that serious clashes can be prevented or minimized. The proposed African Union mission to determine the positions of the Government and rebel forces on the ground will open the way for disengagement, which could make it possible to extend this period of stability through to the negotiation of a comprehensive agreement. Such stability would not only lead to fewer people fleeing their homes and permit relief agencies to extend the depth and reach of their operations, it could also allow internally displaced persons and refugees to return home and significantly improve the protection environment, particularly for women and children, who continue to face deplorable sexual abuse and exploitation. Physical separation between the Government and rebel movements would also diminish opportunities for militia attacks on civilians. This will require a generous response from donor Governments both to AMIS and the relief agencies. I appeal for such support as a matter of urgency.